

PATENT APPLICATION

AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. §1.111

U.S. Application No. 09/162,103

- line 10, delete "synergetic" and insert -synergistic--;
- line 15, delete "microscopes" and insert --microscope's--.
- Page 7, line 4, delete "close" and insert --closed--;
- line 5, after "cause", insert --an--.
- Page 8, line 22, after "require", insert --a--.

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Amended) An electron microscope, comprising:

a main vacuum chamber housing a stage therein and connected to a vacuum pump;

a load lock for loading a specimen into said main vacuum chamber; [and,]

a minicolumn; and

a mini-environment housing [a] said minicolumn.

2. (Amended) The electron microscope of claim 1, wherein said mini-environment

comprises an opening to the main chamber for introducing [and extruding] said minicolumn into [and from] the main vacuum chamber and extracting said minicolumn from said main vacuum chamber.

3. (Amended) The electron microscope of claim 1, wherein said mini-environment comprises a bellows structure for introducing [and extruding] said minicolumn into [and from] the main vacuum chamber and extracting said minicolumn from said main vacuum chamber.

Claim 5, line 2, delete "structured" and insert -structure--.

Claim 7, line 4, after "loading" insert -a--.

Claim 9, line 3, delete "miniocolumn" and insert -minicolumn--.

Please add the following new claims:

--18. An electron microscope, comprising:

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a main vacuum chamber housing a stage therein and connected to a vacuum pump;

a load lock for loading a specimen into said main vacuum chamber;

a plurality of minicolumns; and

a mini-environment housing said minicolumns.

--19. The electron microscope of claim 18, wherein said mini-environment comprises an opening to the main chamber for introducing said minicolumns into the main vacuum chamber and extracting said minicolumns from said main vacuum chamber.

--20. The electron microscope of claim 18, wherein said mini-environment comprises a bellows structure for introducing said minicolumns into the main vacuum chamber and extracting said minicolumns from said main vacuum chamber.

--21. An electron microscope comprising:

a main vacuum chamber housing a stage therein and connected to a vacuum pump;

a load lock for loading a specimen into said main vacuum chamber; and

a plurality of minicolumns.

B6 --22. The electron microscope of claim 21, wherein at least one of said minicolumns is situated inside the main vacuum chamber at a tilt with respect to the other minicolumns.

--23. The electron microscope of claim 22, wherein said tilt is variable.

--24. An electron microscope comprising:

a main vacuum chamber connected to a vacuum pump and housing:

a turntable stage;

a holding arm; and

a plurality of minicolumns attached to said holding arm.